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ABSTRACT

The role of colleges in providing educational opportunities for adults during the 1980s is discussed by the president of New York University. Relevant federal legislation is noted, along with New York University's programming for adults. The following five national priorities for adult education are considered: (1) more attention should be directed to education that helps workers in their jobs; (2) better training should be provided for displaced workers; (3) equal educational opportunity should be provided for adults; (4) the rate of adult illiteracy should be slowed; and (5) adults should be assisted to keep up with the phenomenal increase of new knowledge. It is claimed that prevailing patterns of education and training and governmental policies have not sufficiently changed to accommodate the adult learner. Recommendations to colleges include: colleges need to evaluate themselves and define their distinctive roles in providing adult education and to coordinate with other providers such as industry; rigorous standards for continuing education programs and highly qualified educators and administrators are needed; and schools need to be responsive to new markets and to special needs of adults. Innovative approaches to meeting adult learning needs are also summarized. (SW)

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REMARKS OF DR. JOHN BRADEMAS
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NATIONAL UNIVERSITY CONTINUING EDUCATION ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

APRIL 17, 1984

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It is for several reasons that I am glad to be here this morning.

First, let me thank the president of the National University Continuing Education Association, Adelle Robertson, and the chairman of this conference, your president-elect, Harvey Stedman, for inviting me here today. I commend the members of NUCEA for selecting Dean Stedman to be your next president. The forceful and effective leadership he has shown as our dean at New York University's School of Continuing Education should prove invaluable to your organization at a turning point in the history of adult education.

Second, I am pleased to salute the National University Continuing Education Association, a dynamic force for 69 years in the development of adult education.

And finally, I am glad to have the opportunity to discuss how our nation's colleges and universities can fulfill our responsibility to provide educational opportunities for adults in this country during the 1980s.

I approach this topic from several perspectives.

For over two decades, I served on the committee of the U.S. House of Representatives with responsibility for legislation to support education at all levels.

During my years in Congress, several measures were enacted to aid adult education. I think here of Title I of the Higher Education Act, first passed in 1965, and reauthorized by the Higher Education Amendments of 1972, 1976 and 1980. Title I established a program of grants to colleges and universities for continuing education and community service. In 1976 Congress enlarged the scope of Title I with the passage of the Lifelong Learning Act. And Title IV of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 first extended financial aid to half-time students.

I think as well of the Adult Basic Education Act of 1966; the Veterans' Education and Employment Assistance Act, and other legislation to support the education of veterans; and the Employers' Education Assistance Act of 1978, which allowed all employer-paid tuition assistance plans to be tax-free.

I was a strong champion of all these measures.

I was, moreover, the chief House sponsor of legislation establishing the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities, which have provided significant funds to lifelong learning; and a co-sponsor of the Middle Income Student Assistance Act of 1979, which increased aid to half-time students.

And, you may be interested to know, in 1972 I chaired a Task Force on Continuing Education and Public Affairs as part of The

Study on Continuing Education and the Future, conducted by the Center for Continuing Education at the University of Notre Dame. This study, supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, resulted in the book, The Learning Society. This entire project was carried out under the innovative leadership of an old and valued friend of mine -- and former constituent -- and one of the country's ablest champions of continuing education, Dean Tom Bergin of Notre Dame.

And finally, I should note that for nearly three years now, I have served as president of the largest private university in the country, New York University, an institution with a deep commitment to lifelong learning, and, as you may also know, I am serving as a member of the Commission on Higher Education and the Adult Learner, established by the American Council on Education in 1981 to address the responsiveness of college and university educators and of public policymakers to adult learners.

So as you can see, I am not a stranger to the subject that brings us all together in Atlanta this week.

Will you allow me a parochial observation? I am particularly proud that New York University has been a pioneer in meeting the educational needs of adults. Since 1832, New York University has offered evening lectures and courses for adults. At present all schools of the University open their doors to nontraditional students, providing part-time degree programs and non-credit courses.

Our School of Continuing Education, known as SCE, will this fall, under Harvey Stedman's gifted leadership, celebrate its 50th anniversary. Ours is one of the largest and oldest university-based adult education programs in the country, with more than 50,000 students enrolled each year in 2,000 courses. SCE offers credit and non-credit courses for career advancement, academic development and cultural enrichment. I shall speak more of SCE in a few moments, but I must not here fail to mention the Gallatin Division of New York University, which has also devised a variety of new educational opportunities for adults. The Gallatin Division emphasizes independent scholarship and allows students to chart their own courses of study.

Knowing this background, you will not be surprised to hear me say that I believe one of the most significant issues facing colleges and universities today is the growing need for lifelong learning and for coherent strategies to serve the adult learner.

As you are all well aware, over the past year there has been a dramatic resurgence of interest in education in our country. We have been virtually inundated by a wave of studies and reports placing education at the top of the nation's agenda. Stressing the role of our schools in building the nation's future, these reports have urged sweeping reforms at the elementary, secondary and college level.

For example, the National Commission on Excellence in Education declared: "In a world of ever-accelerating competition and change in the conditions of the workplace, of ever-greater danger, and of ever-larger opportunities for those prepared to meet them, educational reform should focus on the goal of creating a Learning Society...that affords all members the opportunity to stretch their minds to full capacity...."

Nowhere in these reports, however, is there much indication of how to reach this ambitious goal. Nowhere is there a comprehensive discussion of adult education or its role in our national life. Yet you and I know that the education of adults is as indispensable to the future of our country as is the education of children and young people.

The Commission on Higher Education and the Adult Learner, which I mentioned earlier, has identified five priorities for adult education that demand attention and action. These priorities are occupational maintenance, retraining displaced workers, promoting equal opportunity, eliminating adult illiteracy and achieving competence in an information age.

Let me speak briefly of each of these areas.

First, the Commission urges more attention to occupational maintenance, that is to say, education aimed at helping people do their jobs more effectively.

For the United States urgently needs a more competent workforce, what economic consultant Anthony Patrick Carnevale calls "smarter workers working smarter." Carnevale points out that from 1963 to 1975, the United States' share of the world's skilled workers fell from 29 percent to 26 percent, and that this country dropped from second to seventh place in the skill level of workers.

Workers -- from skilled laborers to the most sophisticated professionals -- increasingly will require occupational maintenance to keep up with the changing requirements of their jobs. Employees unable to master or compete with new technologies, burnt-out middle managers, professionals falling behind in their fields or having to meet certification criteria -- all need continuing education. And for most of these adults, one-time catch-up efforts won't be enough.

A second recommendation of the Commission is for better retraining of displaced workers, educational services the United States now lacks. There may be as many as 3 million displaced American workers, victims of what economists call "structural unemployment." The most visible of them are in the auto and steel industries. Economists attribute structural unemployment to foreign competition, the transfer of plants to new locations, poor management, labor-saving machinery and inadequate education and training.

"We are paying a national fortune for not grappling with the

problem," says Pat Choate, a senior policy analyst at TRW. At least a third of the nation's unemployment insurance payments go to displaced workers. Social scientists estimate that a rise of one percentage point in the nation's unemployment rate, if sustained over a six-year period, is associated with an increase of 4.1 percent in suicides and of 5.7 percent in homicides.

The Commission on Higher Education and the Adult Learner sets as its third priority for adult education the promotion of equal opportunity. We must enhance access to education for adults who have long been denied it. Those already at a disadvantage because of their race, sex, class or immigrant status may find their lack of learning a further impediment to economic and social mobility.

Our student financial aid programs are today structured to favor full-time students. As a consequence, a single working mother with a college-age child can obtain Federal funds to send her child to college, but if she wishes to become a part-time student, she will probably not qualify for such aid herself.

Fourth, the Commission emphasizes the importance of slowing the soaring rate of adult illiteracy. A shockingly high number of Americans have poor basic skills -- 34 million can't read and 26 million can't write. The International Reading Association estimates that 20 million English-speaking, native-born American adults read or write so poorly that they "have trouble holding

or suffer loss of self-esteem."

I might mention here that when the Studebaker automobile plant in my home district of South Bend, Indiana, shut down twenty years ago, we found, in interviews with the newly unemployed workers, that many of them were unable to read and write. The Studebaker experience, repeated elsewhere in the country, helped lead to the creation of Federal programs to teach adults basic skills.

The fifth goal identified by the Commission is to assist adults in keeping up with the phenomenal increase of new knowledge. John Naisbitt, in his book, Megatrends, estimates that, at present rates, scientific and technical information doubles every 5.5 years, and will soon double every 20 months.

Computer-literacy and computer competence -- the ability to use computer-based machinery -- are becoming increasingly important in our society. Today, more than 10,000 microcomputers or personal computers are in use in homes, businesses, schools and colleges. Computer science is one of the most popular majors at my own and other universities.

But just learning what buttons to push is not enough. Citizens, in order to render judgments on issues of public policy, will more and more find these decisions require a command of complex economic, political and scientific knowledge.

Having described these several national priorities for adult

learners, I should like now to ask: How close are we to achieving them?

As you well know, we have in recent years witnessed an unprecedented boom in continuing education. Adult education is one of the fastest growth areas in post-secondary education, and training programs in industry are expanding at a remarkable rate.

Despite a dramatic rise in lifelong learning, however, the nation is not yet meeting the needs of its adult learners, especially those priorities I have just described.

Most Americans -- including educators, businessmen and policymakers -- persist in thinking that the average college student is eighteen to twenty-two years old and attends full-time. Yet today, one-third of our college students are over the age of 25, while part-time enrollments outnumber full-time enrollments.

Moreover, too many professional educators ignore the so-called "shadow educational system" that has sprouted up in workplaces across the country. But as one lifelong learning expert recently said, that system casts quite a long shadow. Employers spend $30 billion a year on adult education, and the Conference Board estimates that eighty-five percent of all the companies in the United States have their own in-house training programs.

The tenacity of these myths -- that education is for the young and can take place only in traditional settings -- may explain a certain inertia in institutional styles and habits. Neither prevailing patterns of education and training nor governmental policies have sufficiently changed to accommodate the adult learner.

In my view, the growth of continuing education presents an extraordinary opportunity to colleges and universities. But if we are effectively to meet the special needs of this heterogeneous population of students, we must deal with issues of institutional identity and planning, responsive and responsible program development, collaborative networks and the attitudes of governments.

Let me, therefore, make bold to suggest some directions which, or so it seems to me, colleges and universities should take to address the challenges of lifelong learning in the years immediately ahead.

First, we must examine our own institutions to discover how best each of them can serve the adult learner and then assess our own readiness to do so.

In my view, in order to stretch resources further, avoid duplication and concentrate on quality, we require a more effective division of labor among all the diverse providers of adult education.

The Commission on Higher Education and the Adult Learner has now designed a model self-study assessment and planning guide to help colleges and universities evaluate themselves and define their distinctive roles. The Commission intends that by December, 1985, at least 100 colleges and universities will have used the guide to examine their missions, identify necessary changes and begin to make them.

Second, colleges and universities must encourage the development of rigorous standards for continuing education programs.

Neither the criteria developed by professional organizations nor the Continuing Education Unit guidelines adopted by many providers of adult education have been adequate to assure adults that the courses they take meet the tests of excellence.

The Council on the Continuing Education Unit was established in 1977 "to assist in strengthening...standards in the field of continuing education and training." As a first step toward this end, the Council recently reviewed current standards and recommended a framework for developing new ones. I understand that NUCEA has also contributed to the creation of such standards.

My third recommendation is that college and university leaders must attract to adult education deans, directors and faculty of

high quality as well as encourage their professional development. At a time when adult education is viewed on some campuses as a "cash cow" or marginal activity, deans and directors must have the character and influence to gain the respect of their other academic colleagues.

Faculty must not only be skilled at teaching adults but be committed to doing so. Stars and successful professionals may win enrollments but prove disappointing in the classrooom. Faculty should be drawn from the ranks of the other schools of an institution as well as from the community.

Here I want to commend the officials of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for their recent grant to NUCEA to help develop administrators and teachers for careers in continuing education.

Fourth, college and university divisions of continuing education must be responsive to new markets and to the special needs of adults.

I hope you will forgive me if I again speak about the University I know best.

I am pleased to note that the New York University School of Continuing Education has worked hard to keep in step with the changing requirements of adult New Yorkers.

First of all, by establishing our Midtown Center in the bustling

heart of Manhattan, we have made our programs more accessible.

Furthermore, our School prepares people in the skills required by important New York City industries, and thus has become an invaluable resource to the entire community. Our Real Estate Institute, for example, offers 182 courses in this field, more than any other comparable institution in the country. The Institute has 10,000 registrations a year in courses and seminars ranging from financing to appraisal to construction management.

In a world where credentials may mean career advancement, NYU's SCE is a leader in developing a new concept in professional education -- the diploma program. Students can earn what we call a diploma by taking 12 to 18 units of credit studies in designated fields such as direct marketing and hotel administration.

Our School of Continuing Education has also pioneered in serving special audiences -- older persons, women seeking to advance their careers and students wishing to bring their basic skills up to college level. Our American Language Institute, for example, with an annual enrollment of 1000 students, teaches English to foreigners.

There is a fifth item for an agenda for colleges and universities. We need to build stronger alliances between our own institutions and other providers of continuing education.

Let me linger a little longer on this point; it is important.

Certainly colleges and universities must find ways of working more closely with business and the professions.

Regrettably, what might seem a golden opportunity for cooperation on the part of the leading providers of continuing education -- institutions of higher education and employers -- has at times become instead a series of skirmishes and stand-offs.

It is dismaying to many in higher education that employers give only one-fourth of their training dollars to colleges and universities and spend nearly two-thirds of their funds within their own companies or agencies. When business hires faculty from neighboring colleges and universities or competes with them for students, this sense of dismay can fast become distrust and anger.

On the other hand, many corporate training directors complain that colleges and universities that could provide the training expertise that industry requires will not cooperate with them to do so.

Both sides should concede that colleges may often do what companies might do better and vice versa. And both should acknowledge the many points of contact where our two sectors might cooperate.

Let me describe several notable initiatives that I believe relevant to the theme of partnership.

CLEO, a consortium of thirty-four postsecondary institutions in Southeast Pennsylvania, is an educational "brokering" service. The group matches the learning needs of workers in a network of companies, unions and public agencies to appropriate learning opportunities. CLEO recently began developing three model Educational Maintenance Organizations -- in an industrial park, in a company and with a local chamber of commerce. Each EMO will offer adults assessments of their prior learning experience as well as academic and career counseling, and referral to courses.

Plant closings and layoffs pose special problems. The Muskegon Regional Center of Western Michigan University, with the cooperation of twenty-six local companies including foundries, furniture makers and metal assembly plants, has developed a new three-year degree program to retrain displaced workers. The bachelor of science in manufacturing equips workers to handle automated and technically advanced jobs.

The Practice Audit Model Project at Pennsylvania State University brings academics and professionals together to identify and respond to continuing education needs of six professions -- accounting, architecture, clinical dietetics, clinical psychology, medicine and nursing. Strengthening the relationship between universities and the professions is a primary goal of the

project.

And finally, to meet the needs of adult learners, we in higher education must urge Federal, state and local governments to support continuing education.

To maintain a competent workforce requires long-range projection of human resource needs -- of anticipated changes in the job market, in specific job skills and in professional performance standards. Ernest Lynton, Commonwealth Professor at the University of Massachusetts, in a paper prepared for the Commission of Higher Education and the Adult Learner, suggests that government take the lead in establishing human resource councils at the local as well as national level. These councils -- composed of employers, educators and government officals -- would digest and disseminate data from such agencies as the Bureau of Labor Statistics to make periodic projections of resource and training needs.

Government should also review its tax and student aid policies in order to ensure financial support for adult education students and programs.

State and Federal governments should use tax incentives to promote individual and corporate support of continuing education. As you may know, Congress is currently considering the passage of legislation to extend the tax-free status of all employer-paid tuition benefits.

The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act this year provides a significant opportunity to reassess and strengthen the Federal role in continuing education.

I know that NUCEA has recently reviewed draft reauthorization legislation developed by Congressman Paul Simon of Illinois, the distinguished chairman of the House Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education.

Appropriations to implement Title I of the Higher Education Act, the continuing education section of the statute, as reauthorized in 1980, have never been voted by Congress. NUCEA recommended that Federal funds be provided colleges and universities for model programs for adult learners. Your organization suggested specific encouragement for programs to mainstream the adult learner; for innovative educational delivery systems to reach adults off-campus, especially in the workplace; for programs to upgrade career skills; and for improving the use of new educational technologies. We at New York University endorse these recommendations.

It may also be time for Congress to look beyond Title I as the sole mechanism for meeting the needs of nontraditional students. Other sections of the Higher Education Act, specifically the student aid provisions of Title IV, are potential vehicles for channeling support to adult learners.

In this regard, Governor Mario Cuomo and the Legislature of New York State, have taken an important step. Governor Cuomo recently proposed, and the State Legislature approved, legislation to extend student aid through the state Tuition Assistance Program to part-time students.

Of course, I need not remind members of this audience that, with respect to Federal resources for higher education, trade-offs are always involved. Resources committed to student aid must be weighed against the need for adequate funding of programs under Title I.

Allow me then to conclude my remarks with this observation: To the extent that adult education in America is strong, so, too, is our national capacity to face and master change, to chart and shape the future, and to enjoy the rich blessings of democracy, secure in the knowledge that others will not define our future for us.

Each one of us, therefore, as an individual and as a leader in his or her own realm of responsibility, must become an advocate for continuing education.

For we meet at what may prove a time of great historical significance for adult education.

As we gather for this 69th annual conference of NUCEA, let me recall what one of the founders of this organization, Charles Van Hise, then president of the University of Wisconsin, said at the first meeting of this association in 1915. Noting that "the accumulation of knowledge has far outrun the assimilation of the people," Van Hise concluded, it is a "duty of the university to carry to the people the knowledge which they can accumulate for their betterment."

To all of us who are privileged to lead the colleges and universities of our country, these words are a challenge we must heed.